

## **HOLIDAY FUN. THANKSGIVING.**

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Directions. Print out. Keep as a reference.

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### **THANKSGIVING.**

In the fall of 1621, after a hard and devastating year in the New World, the Pilgrims celebrated their first harvest festival with some of the Native Americans who lived in the Plymouth colony area (now known as Plymouth, Massachusetts). The Indians had been celebrating harvest festivals for centuries. Food was plentiful thanks to the Native Americans who shared their planting secrets, hunting grounds, and ancient family recipes with the colonists. They ate fish packed in salt and smoked cured meats (such as fowl, like ducks, geese, turkeys, and deer). They served fruit, corn, squash, pumpkin and other vegetables. For dessert, they made Indian pudding and pies. They even had enough food to lay away for the winter. This first harvest festival was to become the forerunner of the Thanksgiving holiday that we celebrate today. The Pilgrims had beaten the odds. They had built homes in the wilderness, raised crops to stay alive, and made peace with their Indian neighbors. Their governor, William Bradford, proclaimed a day of thanksgiving that would be shared by the colonists and their Native American neighbors. Later, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln appointed a national day of thanksgiving that is held annually on the fourth Thursday of each November.

In the Fall, from September to November, across much of North America, cultivated pumpkins can be seen in fields, on farm stands, and on display. When Halloween comes, pumpkins are made into decorative jack-o'-lanterns, introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. When Thanksgiving arrives, the pulp of the pumpkin is transformed into delicious pumpkin pie, cake, or cookies.

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The first New England Thanksgiving was held in October 1621, after a year of struggle that had produced a better harvest. The dinner involved a day of prayer with a holiday meal and, of course, “pompion” was a sure staple at the table.

Pumpkins were enjoyed and experimented with by the North American Natives throughout the Americas for many centuries before the Europeans arrived and were considered almost as important as corn and beans. Practically every Native American tribe grew and cultivated a wide variety of squash and pumpkins among their rich supply of crops.

The pumpkins were harvested for food. They were wrapped in a protective layer of leaves and were baked in the warm ashes of earth ovens. Water was added for steam. Some were hung up and dried. Some were stored in baskets or pots under ground. Pumpkins were boiled, stewed with meat, fish or fruit. They were added to cornbread, puddings and soups. Sweet pumpkin sauce was used as a topping on corn meal mush. Maple syrup and honey were used as sweeteners.

Since they had no domesticated animals other than wolfish dogs, they made a milk product from corn, nuts, roots, herbs, boiled chestnuts, and hickories that they added to recipes and using it in their general cooking by adding it to particular dishes, such as custards, puddings, corn bread, and pumpkins. The milk was also drunk hot or cold.

Without the help of Native American farmers, the early European settlers would have starved to death. Native American introduced the colonists to farming techniques that they had never seen before. They had developed

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a highly sophisticated pattern of agriculture that involved the intertillage system, the careful planting of single seeds in groups. Fish was used as a fertilizer. The Europeans were used to planting their field crops by scattering seed at random. The new system yielded far more produce than the other.

Native Americans introduced the colonists to many new crops, including tobacco, sunflowers, corn, peas, beans, melons, and many varieties of pumpkins. They shared their ancient family recipes with the colonists and greatly influenced American cooking habits. Baked beans was just one of the stews the colonists learned to make in earthen pots. Popcorn was another. Corn pudding, meat and fish stews and roasts, and garnished of herbs, seeds, and spices were among the many recipes handed down by Native Americans.

The Pilgrims named the pumpkin “pompion,” or “pompkin.” Pumpkin pie, as we know it, probably was not served but other pumpkin dishes were. In the beginning, they stewed it and mixed it with Native American cornmeal to make bread. They also boiled the fruit into a gruel and flavored it with butter, vinegar, and ginger. They baked it whole (wrapped in cabbage leaves) in the hot ashes of the fire. Then, they cut it open, removed the seeds, and served it with animal fat and maple syrup. They hollowed out pumpkins and squash and filled them with milk, eggs, and spices and baked them whole in slow ovens. Later, other pumpkin recipes appeared including soups, stews (with meat, fish, corn, peas, and beans), sauces (served with meat, fish, and desserts), porridge, puddings, pancakes, bread, butter, and pies. Pumpkin beer was brewed from a combination of pumpkin, persimmons, and maple syrup, and pumpkin chips were made

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from pumpkins cut into slices, strung on thread and dried.

**AN EARLY PILGRIM-INVENTED PUMPKIN PIE RECIPE INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:**

1. The top was sliced off the pumpkin.
2. The seeds were scraped out.
3. The cavity was filled with apples, sugar spices, and milk.
4. The top was placed back.
5. Then it was baked.

If pumpkins were not available, other winter squashes were used in recipes and in the South, sweet potatoes became a common replacement. The seeds were taken back to Europe where the pumpkin later became known.

**AMELIA SIMMONS' RECIPE FOR "POMPkin" PIE "NO.2"**  
(From the Amelia Simmons' Cookbook of 1796)

1. 1 quart milk
2. 1 pint pomkin
3. 4 eggs
4. molasses
5. allspice
6. ginger
7. Bake in a "tart paste" or crust of flour for 1 hour.

Reference: Amelia Simmons, American Cookery, 1796, reprinted as The First American Cookbook, Dover Publications, New York, 1984, p.28.

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**MARTHA WASHINGTON'S "POMPKIN PIE"**

In her hand printed cookbook, Martha Washington also had a recipe for "Pompkin Pie."

1. "Pare and cut into pieces a good pompkin.
2. Put it into a granite or porcelain kettle with not more than a teacup of water; cover the kettle and steam the pompkin until tender.
3. While it is hot, add a tablespoon of butter to each quart. Press the whole through a colander, rejecting every particle of water.
4. Also sprinkle over, while the pompkin is hot, after it goes through the colander, a tablespoon of flour to each quart.
5. Now take a quart of this strained pompkin, add to it six well-beaten eggs, a cup of sugar, a quarter of a teaspoonful of mace, a tablespoonful of ginger, a quarter of a nutmeg, and one gill of brandy.
6. Have the dishes lined with good, rich paste, pour in the mixture, put strips of twisted paste across and bake three-quarters of an hour in a quick oven."

Reference: Kansatieteellinen Arkisto 26, Suomen Muinais-muistoyhdistys, 1975, 22-23. From a paper by Margaret Louise Arnott titled "Thanksgiving Dinner: A Study in Cultural Heritage."

**THANKSGIVING cont'd.****LUCY EMERSON'S RECIPES**

IN 1808, LUCY EMERSON WROTE A COOKBOOK ENTITLED "THE NEW ENGLAND COOKERY OR THE ART OF DRESSING" printed for Josiah Parks. In it, she gives recipes for winter squash pudding and pumpkin pie.

**A Crookneck or Winter Squash Pudding**

Core, boil and skin a good squash, and bruize it well; take 6 large apples, pared, cored, and stewed tender, mix together; add 6 or 7 spoonful of dry bread or biscuit, rendered fine as meal, half pint of milk or cream, 2 spoons of rose-water, 2 do. wine, 5 or 6 eggs beaten and strained, nutmeg, salt and sugar to your taste, 1 spoon flour, beat all smartly together, bake.

The above is a good recipe for Pompkins, Potatoes or Yams, adding more moistening or milk and rose-water, and to the two latter a few black or Lisbon currants, or dry whortleberries scattered in, will make it better.

**Pompion**

No. 1 - One quart stewed and strained, 3 pints cream, 9 beaten eggs, sugar, mace, nutmeg and ginger, laid into paste No. 7 or 3, and with a dough spur, cross and chequer it, and bake in dishes three quarters of an hour.

No. 2 - One quart of milk, 1 pint pompkin, 4 eggs, molasses, allspice and ginger in a crust, bake one hour.

**Puff Pastries for Tarts.**

No. 3 - To any quantity of flour, rub in three fourths of its weight of butter, (12 eggs to a peck) rub in one third or half, and roll in the rest.

No. 7 - A PASTE FOR SWEET MEATS: Rub in one third of a pound of butter, and one pound of lard into two pound of flour, wet with four whites well beaten; water to make a paste; roll in the residue of shortening in ten or twelve rollings - bake quick.

**THANKSGIVING cont'd.****Pumpkin Seeds.**

After the seeds are dried for a few days, and cleaned, they can be eaten raw, shell and all, or boiled for a few minutes in salty water and then fried or baked in oil. Then, they can be salted and sprinkled with spices. Seeds can also be used in breads, muffins, cakes, sauces (such as pesto), and other recipes. The Lady Godiva pumpkin has wonderful pumpkin seeds for those who enjoy eating them. The seeds have no shell and can be toasted or fried. Lady Godiva is yellowish, usually has green stripes or markings, and averages about 6 pounds. The flesh is not table quality. Tricky Jack (Farmers), a bush type pumpkin developed by the New Hampshire Experiment Station also produces hull-less seeds. Hulled pumpkin seeds are called pepitas. Pumpkin seeds can be stored for a few months in a cool, dry place but will keep longer if refrigerated. They may also be frozen.

**Pumpkin Flowers.**

Pumpkin flowers can be eaten in salads, soups, and stews. They can also be dipped in batter (remove stamens and stems and then dry) and fried in oil or fat with or without spices, such as ginger, basil and salt.

**Pumpkin Spice. (Makes about 3 tablespoons.)**

4 tsp. ground cinnamon

2 tsp. powdered ginger

2 tsp. grated nutmeg

1 tsp. ground allspice

1 tsp. ground cloves.

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### **Pumpkin Butter.**

Combine pureed pumpkin to a base of honey seasoned with cinnamon, ginger, ground cloves and lemon juice. Taste to adjust seasonings. Cook over a low heat for 45-60 minutes and pour into sterilized canning jars and seal immediately. A small portion will keep for several weeks. Spread over muffins or toast.

### **Common Pumpkin Flavorings.**

allspice	brown sugar	cheese (mild white)	chives		
cinnamon	cloves	cumin	curry powder	dill	garlic
ginger	honey	juices	mace	maple sugar	
maple syrup	marshmallow	molasses	mustard	nutmeg	
parsley	pineapple	rosemary	thyme	vegetables	

### **Pumpkin Sauce.**

No. 1 – Butter, margarine, oil or juice with brown sugar; sausage droppings; marshmallow.

No. 2 – Sugar, soy sauce, sherry.

No. 3 – Brown pumpkin seeds in oil and blend in a blender with 1 cup of chicken stock.

No. 4 – Puree pumpkin; add cinnamon, brown sugar or molasses, nutmeg, allspice, cloves; dilute with chicken stock to taste.